

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4502

October 5, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

I would like to request some assistance on a matter of great importance to me and a family of a U.S. military pilot lost during World War II.

My office has been in contact with my constituent, Mr. Larry Zaetz, regarding his late brother, 1LT Irwin Zaetz (0-791661), a Vermonter lost during World War II when his plane crashed in Northeast India. That plane, B-24 "Hot as Hell" (Serial Number 42-73308, 308th Bomb Group, 425th Bomb Squadron), disappeared en route to Chabua, India, from Kunming, China in January 1944. Since that time, Lieutenant Zaetz has been listed by the Department of Defense's Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as "Service Personnel Not Recovered Following World War II."

In December of 2006, an independent researcher discovered the crash site of "Hot as Hell" and the remains of its crew while trekking in Arunachal Pradesh, India. He subsequently filed a report with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC). Upon learning of this discovery, my constituent, Mr. Zaetz contacted JPAC about the recovery of his brother's remains. My office made an inquiry on Mr. Zaetz's behalf to JPAC and their response indicated that they were not authorized by DPMO to investigate and excavate this site because of concerns that conditions on the ground make it "an unsuitable risk to conduct JPAC operations." JPAC also cited the Government of India's position that Arunachal Pradesh is a sensitive area and that entry into that region is tightly controlled.

It concerns me that a current, full reassessment of the situation on the ground in Arunachal Pradesh has not been conducted. JPAC has recovered remains in extremely challenging locations all over the globe, from cliffs in Papua New Guinea, to 16,000 foot peaks in the Himalayas, to the jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia. How is it then, that the Department of Defense cannot send a recovery team into an ally's country to recover the remains of American service members? It is inconceivable to me that the Department of Defense might not be doing everything in its power to recover the remains of our brave service members who gave their lives during the epic days of World War II.

I respectfully request documentation verifying that DPMO has conducted a full and recent

review of the situation in Arunachal Pradesh and that it has contacted the proper officials within the Indian government regarding this matter. If this has not happened, I am writing to request that immediate action be taken to fully investigate and implement the retrieval of the remains of the crew of "Hot as Hell."

If you require additional information or if you have any questions concerning this matter, please have your staff contact Geoffrey Pippenger in my Burlington, Vermont office at (802) 862-0697. Thank you for your time and for your prompt response to these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bernard Sanders". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator